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# TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE....

A Column on Consumer Issues  
by Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem's  
Consumer Protection and Antitrust Division

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## SECURITY FREEZE

A credit security freeze helps stop identity thieves in their tracks. You have the right under North Dakota law to put a security freeze on your credit file. A security freeze means that your credit file cannot be shared with potential creditors without your consent. Most businesses will not open credit accounts without first checking a consumer's credit history. If your credit files are frozen, even someone who has stolen your name and social security number would probably not be able to get credit in your name.

Here is how it works. You must fill out the appropriate forms to place a security freeze on your credit report and send them to each of the three credit reporting agencies, Equifax, Experian, and Transunion. These transactions will cost you \$5 per credit reporting agency. If you are the victim of identity theft, there is no charge to you to place the security freeze. Once the freeze has been placed on your credit report, the credit reporting agency will send you a PIN or a password which can be used to thaw the freeze should you wish to do so in the future. If an identity thief tries to use your social security number to obtain credit, the creditor will not be able to view your credit report because it is frozen and, therefore, will not issue credit to the thief.

Placing a security freeze on your credit report will not adversely affect any existing credit accounts you have. The bank, your mortgage company, and credit card companies will still have access to your credit report, but it will prevent any new creditors from viewing your account. The security freeze does not affect your credit score or your ability to view your own credit report.

If you want to open a new credit account or get a loan, you can lift the freeze on your credit file by using the PIN or password provided to you by each credit reporting agency. You can lift the freeze for a specific date or period of time such as 30 days. You must pay the \$5 fee to replace the freeze.

The forms to place a security freeze on your credit report can be found at [www.ag.nd.gov](http://www.ag.nd.gov). There is one form for each credit reporting agency and married couples must file separate requests with each agency.

*The Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division investigates allegations of fraud in the marketplace. Investigators also mediate individual complaints against businesses. If you have a consumer problem or question, call the Consumer Protection Division at 328-3404, toll-free at 1-800-472-2600, or 1-800-366-6888 (w/TTY). This article and other consumer information is located on our website at [www.ag.nd.gov](http://www.ag.nd.gov).*

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